

Unemployment in Florida is at a 16-year high, foreclosures continue to soar and credit is tight. These are some of the many challenges facing our families and senior citizens in this period of economic uncertainty. What the country truly needs now is a common-sense plan to revive our economy and protect and produce more American jobs in the United States. In order to achieve these goals, there are several key issues that need to be addressed without delay or partisan rancor:

### **Tax Relief for middle-class working Americans and small businesses**

The 2001 and 2003 Tax Relief programs, which will expire in 2010, should be extended into the future. If the Congress fails to do this, individual and business tax rates will return to their earlier, higher levels.

The last thing our slumping economy and hard-working Americans need now is a massive, \$680 billion tax increase.

### **Retirement Security**

Senior citizens and retirees living on their Nest Eggs are particularly vulnerable to the current economic difficulties. Many are worried about the continued viability and long-term solvency of their pensions, IRAs, and 401(k) plans. To help, I supported the new law that suspends "required minimum distributions" for 2009. This program will help by not forcing retirees to take funds out of their retirement plans, and thus give these plans an opportunity to regain value that was lost in 2008.

Key Federal safety net programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, must be protected and their long-term solvency be ensured to help retirees and seniors in their post-employment years. We need a non-partisan Blue Ribbon Commission to make recommendations about how best to guarantee Social Security and Medicare's long-term future. In the early Reagan Administration, the "Greenspan Commission" helped save Social Security for 30 years. We need a 21st Century version of this to help keep Social Security and Medicare safe for the Baby Boom generation.

### **Housing**

I supported legislation (H.R. 3221) that created a new Federal program to help middle-class homeowners transition out of risky, short-term home loans and into more stable, long-term mortgages. It also established a \$7,500 tax credit for first-time homebuyers in order to help young families and individuals move from renting to owning their own homes. I also support a National Catastrophe Fund to help Florida homeowners struggling with rising insurance rates. And we still need to enact legislation to help make insurance more affordable for families in Florida.

### **Compete in the 21st Century Global Marketplace**

95% of the world's consumers live outside of the United States. Opening up foreign markets for U.S. goods and services helps create jobs here at home. The U.S. must continue to negotiate and implement more bi-lateral Free Trade Agreements, which enable domestic exports to grow by opening up new markets for our goods and products abroad. U.S. workers are the best workforce in the world, as long as they compete on a level playing field. We must continue to support Federal job re-training programs to help workers adapt to the changing marketplace of the 21st Century.

The U.S. must also maintain its status as a world leader in education, particularly as the demand for students with strong mathematics and science backgrounds continues to grow. We can remain competitive in the 21st Century only as long as we maintain a strong primary, secondary, and post-secondary education system which produces top-notch students well-suited for the employment needs of a technology-reliant society.

### **A Balanced, Comprehensive Energy Plan to Break Our Dependence on Foreign Oil**

Our energy crisis has been a major drain on our economy. Last summer, families struggled to fill up their gas tanks, with prices at almost \$4 per gallon at the pump. Although gas prices have declined dramatically since then, we still need a comprehensive, long-term Energy Policy that's makes the U.S. "energy-independent" within ten years. We need to ramp up our production and

utilization of renewable energy sources, increase conservation including recycling, bring online more, new nuclear power plants, and authorize environmentally-safe drilling for oil and gas in the Alaskan wilderness.